

THE FOOT WARMER

Official publication of the San Diego Region



ANTIQUE AUTOMOBILE CLUB
of AMERICA



AUGUST 2026

Club Website: <https://sandiegoregion.aaca.com>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/SanDiegoRegionAACA

President's Greeting

Dear San Diego Region AACA members,

As summer presses on and the heat melts us all, thanks to Bob Gunthorp for putting together a great last-minute replacement tour — 13 members visited the Living Coast Discovery Center in Chula Vista, just north of the new Gaylord Resort off E Street. San Diego has so many hidden treasures — if you know of other spots worth visiting, the club would love to hear about them.

Labor Day brings our annual Pizza Party — come join us for a relaxed evening with fellow members. Guests are welcome too.

Mark your calendar for September 12th: the Sunset Cliffs Car Show. Brad Zemcik sent out details last month for anyone wanting to show their car — not sure if spots are still open, but it's a great show either way.

Tom McIlravy



Keith Wahl's sharp Lark at the Coronado Parade last month!

The Foot Warmer is the approximately monthly newsletter for the San Diego Region, AACA. Member submissions are solicited, welcomed, and encouraged. NO, REALLY: Please email articles and photos of your antique automobiles and related activities to the editor at drjohn96@mac.com.

CLUB INFO

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT: TOM MCILRAVY (25-26)

VP: MARK REBELLO (25-26)

SECRETARY: SUSAN WOODS (25-26)

TREASURER: JOHN BOYD (25-26)

DIRECTORS AT LARGE:

NANNETTE CLARK (26-27)

BARBARA FOLEY (26-27)

BOB GUNTHORP (26-27)

JACK HEACOCK (26-27)

KEY PLAYERS

MEMBERSHIP: MARK RICHARDS

TOURS: TOM MCILRAVY

REFRESHMENTS: DIANE RICHARDS

ANNUAL BANQUET: BOB GUNTHORP

ANNUAL AWARDS: MARK REBELLO, JACK HEACOCK

CORONADO PARADE: AL SMITHSON

SILENT MOVIES: AL SMITHSON

ACCC REP/LEGIS: SHELDON JURIST

CLUB PHOTOGRAPHERS:

TOM MCILRAVY AND THE MEMBERS
VOLUNTEER SQUAD

EDITOR: JOHN BOYD

PROGRAMS: Vacant

(SEE CLUB ROSTER FOR ALL CONTACT INFO.)



Anniversaries	
Jim & Catherine Woolsey	August 16
Robert Wagner & Robert Lasher	September 15
Darren Farnesi & Len Pistoria	September 30

COMING CLUB EVENTS

SEP	7	Pizza Party at Beers Center
	12	Sunset Cliffs Car Show
	26	Campo Train Museum
OCT	5	General Meeting — Beers Center
	10	Mt Miguel Car Show — John Boyd
	24	Lindo Lake Picnic — Ricky Logier
NOV	2	General Meeting — Beers Center
	15	Awards Banquet — Bob Gunthorp
DEC	7	General Meeting — 2027 Planning

Birthdays	
Susan Christian	August 1
Len Pistoria	August 6
Jim Woolsey	August 8
Paula Okey	August 13
Marilyn Clements	August 15
Sheila Jurist	August 17
Jeri Ibbetsen	August 20
Luke Kensen	August 20
Doug Clements	August 21
Mike Williams	August 28
Dr. Susan Woods	August 30
Betty Holmes	September 6
Yolanda Hylton	September 7
Norma Almanza	September 9
Robert McAllister	September 18
Al Smithson	September 20
Barbara Parker	September 21
Paul Johnson	September 23
Tom O'Hara	September 27
Paul Priser	September 27
Sam Judd	September 30

August General Meeting

The August General Meeting Hobby Night went off without a hitch. The accompanying photos capture some of the displays, fans, and conversations from the evening. By all accounts, this annual tradition has earned its spot on the calendar.

Congratulations to Paula Okey, who won the name badge drawing — and thank you to Tom McIlravy for the photos!

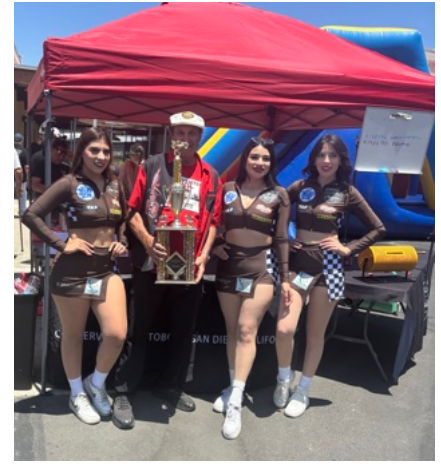


August SDACC Meeting

The third 2026 meeting of the San Diego Association of Car Clubs was held in the Big Kahuna's parking lot at 600 Palm Ave, Imperial Beach. Bob Gunthorp attended, displaying his 1965 Mercedes 220SE four-door sedan. About 40 vehicles were on display, including 20 VWs brought by the Air Cooled/Volkswagen Club. The oldest vehicle present was a 1941 Dodge ½-ton truck. There was no new information on legislation from Sacramento. The main topics of discussion were the car show insurance SDACC provides to member clubs, and upcoming car shows in the San Diego area.— Ricky Logier

Conservative Auto Body Car Show

Ricky Logier and Keith Wahl attended the Conservative Auto Body Car Show June 14 in Santee. Keith's Studebaker Hawk took home a great trophy!



Evans Garage Tour

July 18 saw the AACA, Packard, Pierce-Arrow, and Horseless Carriage Clubs invited to a tour of the Evans Garage. Owned by San Diego hotelier Bill Evans Jr., this private collection of rare antique automobiles is not normally open to the public, making it a special opportunity for club members to view the cars firsthand. Tom McIlravy provided the photos of visitor's cars outside the garage.



Stagnation — by Keith Wahl

Greetings, Clubsters!

As you may recall from a recent newsletter, Mel Hildebrandt bravely joined me on my noble quest to acquire a Triumph Stag—because clearly, I enjoy emotional rollercoasters disguised as automobiles. This was our second attempt, because apparently I didn't learn anything the first time.

We finally secured a specimen from a fellow Stag owner in West Hills—a man known to Mel and also known for outsourcing anything more complicated than opening the hood. This gentleman has owned several Stag cars, none of which he has personally met on a mechanical level.

The engine, we were told, had been rebuilt about 8 years ago by a reputable shop in Chatsworth and had only 4,000 miles on it. Practically brand new! Mel and I test drove it, and it seemed... fine. Not “buy a lottery ticket” fine, but “this probably won’t explode immediately” fine. It needed a little tuning and some minor fixes—no big deal, right? I did a few “quick” jobs: transmission filler tube, some electrical tinkering, carburetor needle swaps, timing tweaks, exhaust manifold gaskets—you know, the usual light weekend relaxation activities.

Then came the drive back from Crest.

At first, the car made a charming little noise—like a playing card in a bicycle wheel. Nostalgic! Quaint! Within minutes, that charming sound evolved into “uh-oh,” and shortly thereafter into “well, this is bad.” The car politely gave up on life and stopped on the freeway. No overheating, no drama—it just... opted out. It would turn over, but starting was apparently beneath it.

We towed it home. The next day, it started again, because of course it did—just to mess with us. But it sounded like it had taken up a side gig as a percussion instrument. We checked timing chains (fine), electric water pump (working), and ran a compression test. Cylinders 6 and 8 were slacking—down 10 and 15 lbs. No oil in the water, no water in the oil, plugs dry. Basically, nothing obvious—just vibes.

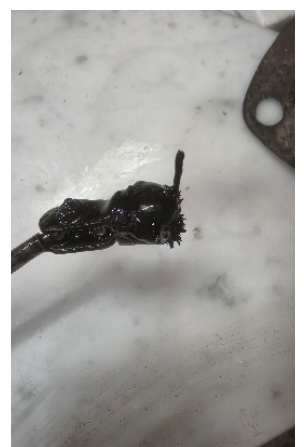
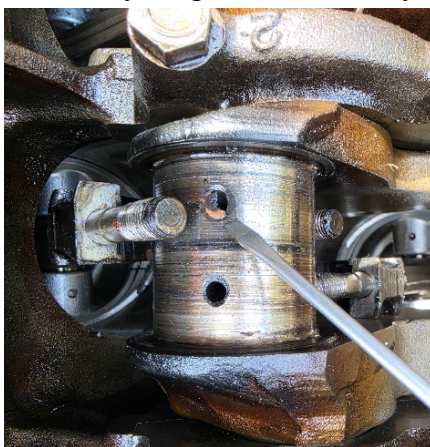
I took it out again and made it a heroic two blocks before limping back home with approximately zero horsepower and 100% terrible noises.

So we dug deeper. Torque converter? Fine. Flex plate? Fine. Oil filter? Ah.

The oil filter had been installed in a way that can only be described as “creative.” It was crushed internally, blocking oil flow like a cholesterol-clogged artery after Thanksgiving dinner. The result? A lovely collection of metal shavings in the oil—always a crowd favorite.

At this point, the engine came out. And inside... well, let’s just say the bearings and crankshaft had seen better days. The pistons and cylinder walls also looked like they’d been through a mild sandblasting session.

The engine is now at the machine shop, where professionals will determine just how bad my life choices have been. Options include boring it .040 over (the max), or installing liners and going back to stock pistons. The crank will be polished and nitrided, and we’ll check the block and heads for further surprises—because why stop now? As it stands, the car’s power output has been upgraded to 1 HP: One Human Pushing it into the garage. Stay tuned for Chapter 2: Reassembly, Regret, and Possibly Redemption. Wish me luck.



Reminder: Sunset Cliffs Auto Show — September 12

Details were included in the July Foot Warmer, albeit with an incorrect date. See the web site for current info:
www.sunsetcliffsautoshow.com Send any questions to Brad at zman92107@yahoo.com.

What has the Editor Been Up To?

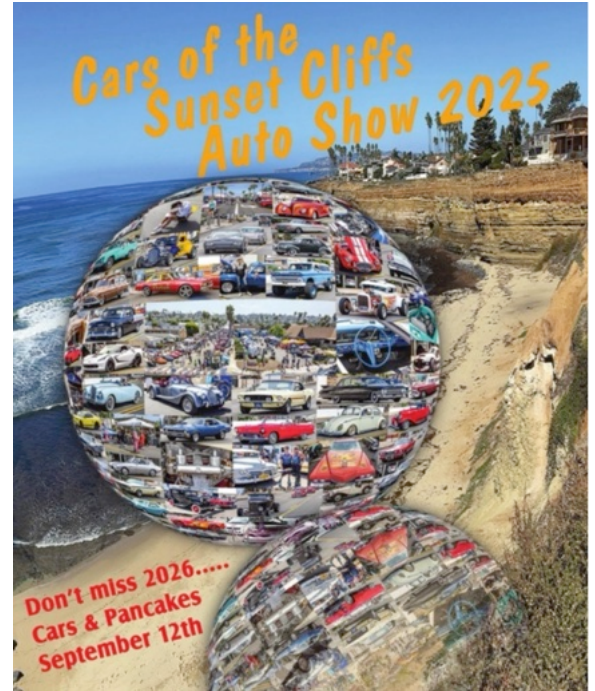
By John Boyd

As you might have noticed, this issue of the Foot Warmer is a bit past due (not to say past its prime)! Why, you might be wondering. No, no cruises this month — that was back in late July, when Barbara and I had one of the very best cruises of our lives on *Seabourn Encore*. We sailed from Vancouver to Juneau on this 600-passenger deluxe ship with our son and his wife. The highlight for me was a Zodiac excursion into the Inian Islands early one morning to see the wildlife. And we did! Humpback whales within 100 yards, seals, sea lions, eagles, an osprey. We were fortunate enough to catch the whales bubble-net feeding — a clever trick they've learned. They team up and swim in circles around a school of fish, blowing bubbles to form a curtain that herds the fish into a tight cluster, where they can be snapped up in bulk! We had so much fun that when we got home, I completely forgot to assemble the member contributions into the August Foot Warmer. Until now. Sorry!

Since we returned, I've also been working with Claude, an AI I've hired temporarily, to rearrange the Airflow Club's membership and car ownership records into a more efficient system — one that will be easier to hand off to a successor when I eventually retire from this job. For the record-keepers among you: for ten years I've kept membership and car-ownership records for the Airflow Club of America in two separate files, with a fair amount of overlap between them. We're consolidating that into one cleaner, better-organized system.

To pull this off, I signed up for a paid Claude subscription, and burned through a couple hundred bucks in charges before I learned to handle the expensive parts myself and let Claude do what it's actually good at. I'm getting close to a solution now — the member and car records are all loaded in and checked, and I just need to work out some polished formats for publishing them to the club.

Coming back to the main point: I think my focus on this project, and the hours I've sunk into it, contributed to my slipping on the August Foot Warmer. But it's been fun — this issue is only 3–4 weeks late, for context, so I figure that's not bad for an old dog learning new tricks.



Seabourn Encore



Humpback whales bubble-net feeding in Inian Bay

AACA Tour: Living Coast Discovery Center

On Saturday, August 22, AACA members gathered at the Living Coast Discovery Center parking lot at 1000 Gunpowder Point Drive in Chula Vista, a lesser-known gem tucked along the bay. A shuttle bus carried the group from the parking lot into the center, where members explored several aquariums and exhibits featuring native San Diego Bay wildlife, from sharks and rays to shorebirds and reptiles. The club covered the cost of admission for attendees. Following the tour, the group headed a few blocks up "E" Street for a no-host lunch at Black Angus, capping off a relaxed morning of exploration and good company. Thanks to Bob G. for organizing the outing and to Tom McIlravy for the great photos!



Contributed Story — by Les Smith

The Story Behind ...

Great Grandfather McCray's First Ride in an Automobile

Great grandfather William Newton McCray (1851-1928) exchanged numerous letters with his middle child Ethel (1881-1955) around the beginning of the 20th century — he at home in Warren, Pennsylvania, and she in college in Chicago. His letters reveal a man in awe of the beauty surrounding him — thoughts that appear to have been easy for him to express in the many letters he wrote. Writing appears to have come naturally to him.

One letter among a collection of family memorabilia passed on to me in May (2026) caught my attention. It reflects both his usual writing style and the closeness he had with those around him. Dated May 15, 1901, this three-page report of family activities to his daughter then living far away included an update on a topic I am certain they were following. Grandfather McCray wrote:

“Think I have beaten you in getting a first ride in an automobile. Mr. Grary said to Miner last night, ‘take McCray out for a ride,’ so I got in and he opened up the throttle and away we went and I with my nerves strung up to their highest tension, ready to jump fearing we might run over somebody or run into the ditch.

“Well, we had good luck and got back all right. I must say that they are very speedy and ride smoothly and very easy. I think when you get accustomed to them you would enjoy them better.”

That vehicle may have been a Curved Dash Oldsmobile, the first successful mass-produced American automobile. Or maybe a Winton or a Packard. There were less than 10,000 automobiles in the United States in 1901 — this was two years before Henry Ford set up shop — and they were built by countless manufacturers now long-gone. Grandfather McCray likely bought his first automobile soon after that ride; next evidence of ownership was his being among 22 Warren residents who had purchased Franklin automobiles listed in a 1917 newspaper advertisement — his a Series 9 model. The ad noted that “In two years no Franklin owner has had a blowout. Only nine punctures have occurred in twenty-two cars, and only one owner has bought a new tire. Each averaged from 19 to 25 miles to a gallon of gasoline, including winter running, and there have been only two replacements of broken parts in all the cars.”

Warren is about 36 miles from Titusville, Pennsylvania, birthplace of the modern petroleum industry. The first successful oil well was drilled there in 1859, launching the world's first major oil boom that transformed petroleum from a curiosity into a major industry. The business of oil spread rapidly and caught the attention of many enterprising men, including grandfather McCray. He is listed in several census reports as an Oil Producer, the middlemen involved in moving petroleum from wellheads to refineries. And he likely was bought out by John D. Rockefeller in that robber baron's unrelenting drive to dominate America's oil business — the Standard Oil monopoly that was eventually broken up by the Supreme Court in 1911.

I inherited Grandfather McCray's roll top desk with upper bookcases that he likely bought around 1885. It's easy to visualize him seated before it regularly, putting pen to paper in writing his letters that have survived to today. Letter writing was the primary means by which people stayed in touch around 1900, even over short distances when travel was mainly by train.

That letter and its report reminded me of the day a year ago when I caught my first glimpse of an autonomous — driverless — automobile in San Jose, California. White Waymo taxis seemed to be everywhere that weekend, rolling around the town silently, almost mystically, as the computer system guiding them in “learning the area,” gathering the massive volume of data required that would soon enable Waymo to begin providing paid service. I downloaded the Waymo app in hopes of taking my first driverless ride that day, only to learn that the start of Waymo taxi service was still several months away. If there's anywhere where autonomous vehicles belong, it is the San Jose area — Silicon Valley — populated with technology companies of all sizes spread throughout the region.

And when I finally do take my first ride in a driverless vehicle, I will certainly text my grandson Degan afterward to report having reached this milestone of modern life — if he doesn't report having done so first.

Editor's note: Les Smith is a retired San Diego mathematics teacher the editor recently met. Les contributed this tale when he learned I edit the Foot Warmer.